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Letter dated 28 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 26 March 2001 from Mr. Hamid Yusuf Hammadi, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. The Minister refers to outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in neighbouring countries and to the great efforts that have been made to guard against the spread of the disease to Iraq. These efforts are, however, being thwarted by the enormous difficulties encountered by the comprehensive preventive vaccination programme owing to the destruction of laboratories for the production of vaccine against the disease by the Special Commission in 1996 and the inhuman position taken by the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom in placing holds on contracts for the importation of serums and vaccines on the grounds that they may be dual-use items, so that the disease is likely to appear in Iraq in the form of a widespread epidemic if urgent measures are not taken to remedy the current situation.

The Minister states that the relevant Iraqi authorities will initiate contacts with specialist companies with a view to the renovation of the laboratories for the production of foot-and-mouth vaccine, and that you will be asked to approve the financing of the costs of the project from revenues under the memorandum of understanding. He warns against attempts by the United States and the United Kingdom to obstruct this process, and he expresses the hope that these two countries will understand the catastrophic consequences of their present policy of exploiting the mechanisms of the United Nations to commit genocide against the people of Iraq.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed A. **Al-Douri**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 28 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to our letters addressed to you on 27 February 1999 (S/1999/219, annex) and 11 April 1999 (S/1999/411, annex) concerning the danger of foot-and-mouth disease spreading in Iraq, I should like to inform you that the outbreak of the disease in the United Kingdom and its communication to Europe as well as the appearance of cases in countries adjacent to Iraq have prompted Iraq's veterinary authorities to summon all their efforts to guard against the spread of the disease to the country. These efforts have, however, been thwarted by the unjust embargo being maintained against Iraq, by the fact that laboratories for the production of vaccine against foot-and-mouth disease were arbitrarily destroyed by the Special Commission in 1996 and by the inhuman position taken by the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom in placing holds on contracts for the supply to Iraq of vaccines and serums for both humans and animals on the grounds that they are dual-use items. All of these factors have created enormous difficulties for comprehensive preventive vaccination against the disease, so that it is likely to appear in Iraq in the form of a widespread epidemic if urgent measures are not taken to remedy the present situation.

In the early 1970s, Iraq made major investments in immunizing its livestock and an enterprise was established for the production of vaccine against the three types of foot-and-mouth disease (O, A and Asia) and for the identification of the various strains of the virus that causes the disease. The laboratories had a design capacity to produce 12 million doses of triple vaccine a year; their output met all of Iraq's needs; and large quantities of vaccines were exported to Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Laos and France. The enterprise continued to produce and to export until early 1991, and it contributed throughout this period of time to controlling foot-and-mouth disease in Iraq and in other countries in the region. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations also regarded the plant's facilities as reference laboratories for the identification of types and strains of the pathogenic virus.

Work at the enterprise was briefly suspended during the aggression against Iraq by the United States and its coalition partners in 1991. It subsequently resumed, and production continued until 1992. Work then halted when the raw materials held in the plant's stockrooms were exhausted and because it was impossible to import more owing to the blanket sanctions imposed on Iraq.

In 1996, the Special Commission destroyed the laboratory equipment and facilities in an arbitrary manner on the grounds that some items of equipment had been used in the Iraqi biological weapons programme. At the time, Iraq asked the Commission not to destroy the equipment but to place it instead under the ongoing monitoring regime, especially since the biological programme itself had ceased in 1990 and the items of equipment and laboratories in question were the only ones in Iraq that could produce vaccine against foot-and-mouth disease. The Special Commission, however, which took its orders from the United States of America, insisted on destroying the plant, facilities and equipment, including the air-handling equipment that had been in the laboratories. Not only did the Special Commission do this, but it also placed foot-and-mouth vaccine on the list of items subject to the

export/import monitoring mechanism for Iraq approved by the Security Council in its resolution 1051 (1996).

The destruction of these laboratories in 1996 and the restrictions placed on the importation by Iraq of vaccines against foot-and-mouth disease brought the implementation of the preventive vaccination plan in Iraq to a complete standstill and thus caused all the efforts made to control the disease to be wasted. This led to its reappearance and made it difficult to control because of the absence of the technical capacities required for laboratory diagnosis of the disease and the identification of the types and strains that are causing it so that the type of vaccine to be used for immunization can be selected. All of this led to an epidemic of the disease in Iraq in 1998 and caused the loss of 575,421 lambs and calves and the infection of more than 2.5 million animals.

The consequences of this epidemic included an economic catastrophe and a major loss of Iraqi livestock, and its impact was further exacerbated by the comprehensive sanctions being maintained against Iraq. It led to a sharp fall in the incomes of Iraqi farm households, whose livelihood basically depends on what their animals produce, and it also had an impact on per capita protein consumption, given the major extent to which Iraqis depend on red meat, milk and dairy products as important sources of animal protein. This increased the incidence of acute malnutrition, especially among children.

Missions from many United Nations agencies and specialist organizations of relevance have visited Iraq and have referred in their reports to the scale of the destruction caused to livestock as a result of the suspension of the production of foot-and-mouth vaccine. They have recommended, as a matter of necessity, the reactivation of this vital facility in order to control foot-and-mouth disease in Iraq in such a way as to have positive repercussions for the region in general.

The facts set forth above confirm the pressing need for the renovation of the facilities and laboratories for the production of foot-and-mouth vaccine. This would include:

1. Production of various strains of vaccine to meet actual needs and ensure a basic stock to cope with emergency situations;

2. Provision of a capacity for the rapid identification and typing of pathogenic strains;

3. Field monitoring for the purpose of assessing and determining the level of immunity of animals vaccinated.

The relevant Iraqi authority will contact specialist companies with a view to the renovation of the laboratories for the production of foot-and-mouth vaccine, and we shall request you to approve the financing of the costs of the eventual contract from those of Iraq's resources that are allocated to the memorandum of understanding, or the so-called oil-for-food programme. We must also warn, even now, against attempts by the United States and the United Kingdom to obstruct the renovation of the laboratories, and we express the hope that these two countries will

show some understanding of the catastrophic effects of their present policy of exploiting the mechanisms of the United Nations in order to pursue a policy of genocide against the people of Iraq.

(*Signed*) Hamid Yusuf **Hammadi**
Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs